



Idaho IBA News

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Spring 2007

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Here Comes Spring!

Colleen Moulton, Idaho IBA Coordinator

Seems like just yesterday we were settling in to winter, turning up our thermostats, and breaking out the skis and snowshoes. And now it's time to open up the windows, and get out and enjoy spring migration!

Before we get into spring activities (which can be found inside), I wanted to acknowledge the few hardy souls that braved the cold and continued bird monitoring at IBAs through the winter: Kathleen Cameron, Poo Wright-Pulliam, Dave Spaulding, Jean Seymour, Terry Gray,



Silver Creek Preserve IBA

Frank Renn, Lee Sopwith, and Bob Ellis. The information they collected can be found inside this issue, including a piece on migration at Mann Lake by Terry.

Thanks everyone!!

Two New IBAs...

Thanks to the work of three Idaho Department of Fish and Game (IDFG) biologists, there were two new IBAs identified in the last few months: Upper Lochsa River and Sand Creek Wildlife Management Area (WMA).

The Upper Lochsa River, located in Clearwater County, was nominated by Jennifer Wik and Joel Sauder from the Lewiston IDFG office. The Lochsa is an important breeding stream for Harlequin Ducks in Idaho; it maintains the highest numbers of breeding pairs in the state. The upper portions of the Lochsa River are largely surrounded by wilderness, and have been designated a national wild and scenic river.

This means that the river runs free and is mostly unchanged from its natural state.

Sand Creek WMA, located in Fremont County, was nominated by its new manager, Josh Rydalch. We have been anxiously awaiting this nomination for quite some time, and were thrilled when Josh jumped on the task. This site is important because it supports large numbers of waterfowl and shorebirds, is a site of exceptional diversity of bird species, and it supports numerous Species of Greatest Conservation Need, including Long-billed Curlew, Trumpeter Swan, Sandhill Crane, and Brewer's Sparrow.

Making Progress

After 7 years, we realized it was probably time to provide an update on Idaho's IBA program. Which led to the creation of the 2007 IBA Progress Report, now available on the IDFG website at: <http://fishandgame.idaho.gov/cms/wildlife/nongame/birds/iba.cfm>. A few key developments in the program include:

- The number of IBAs in Idaho has increased to 60, covering 4.6 million acres; this represents 11% of the state
- Monitoring projects have been initiated at 34 IBAs
- IBA signs have been posted at numerous IBAs around the state
- All Idaho's IBA site information is now available to the public online
- The 'Adopt-an-IBA' program has been launched



Find information on Idaho's IBAs, the Idaho Birding Trail, and more at <http://fishandgame.idaho.gov>

Winter Wonderland...

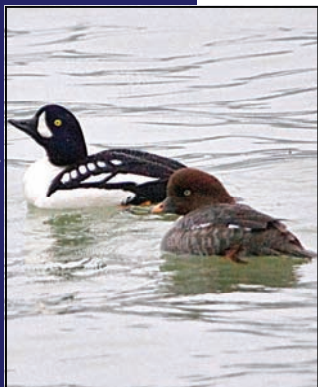
Between November and March (aka Winter), five of Idaho's IBAs were monitored by the dedicated volunteers listed on the first page of this newsletter...and your IBA Coordinator (couldn't be left out of the fun!). The five IBAs monitored were Silver Creek Preserve, Sterling WMA, Mann Lake, the Snake/Clearwater Rivers Confluence, and the Boise River.

eneye were found at the Snake/Clearwater Confluence, which is thought to support the largest inland wintering population of this species in the country. Not to be outdone, folks monitoring Silver Creek Preserve and Sterling WMA provided all of the 116 Trumpeter Swan detections for the winter, with 68 of these detections being recorded at Silver Creek on December 15th.

As is generally the case in Idaho, the majority of the aquatic birds detected were waterfowl (i.e., ducks and geese). Of 48,375 birds counted during 18 surveys, just over 47,000 were waterfowl. The most abundant waterfowl species were Mallards (13,466), Barrow's Goldeneye (8,509), Canada Geese (6,108), Snow Geese (6,003), and Bufflehead (3,861).

A total of 53 different aquatic bird species were recorded this past winter, including 30 species of waterfowl, 4 shorebirds, and 16 waterbirds. Full details on these survey results will be available in the next annual Idaho Bird Inventory and Survey (IBIS) report. However, if you're curious about last year's results, the 2006 IBIS report, which covers through October 2006, is currently available on the IDFG website.

Pair of Barrow's Goldeneye



All but a handful of the Barrow's Gold-

IBIS Spring 2007



Camas Lilies at Camas Prairie Centennial Marsh IBA

As all the birds return to Idaho to breed, we are gearing up for another IBIS monitoring season. Similar to the past couple years, we will have a crew of six wildlife technicians spread throughout Idaho working at many of your IBAs. Many of the sites that they visit are popular birding spots, such as Camas NWR, Market Lake WMA, Fort Boise WMA, Camas Prairie Centennial Marsh WMA, and Coeur d'Alene WMA.

Most of the IBIS team's work will be centered around conducting general aquatic bird counts, where they count all birds along a designated route, and secretive marsh bird playback surveys, where they stand at designated points and track individual marsh birds (such as the Sora) over a 10-minute period.

For those interested in learning more about monitoring at IBAs, there is plenty of opportunity to join the crew on these surveys. If you're interested in joining the crew for a survey near you, or are interested in running one yourself, please contact Colleen Moulton at cmoulton@idfg.idaho.gov, or 208-287-2751.

Deer Flat Great Backyard Bird Count

Hoping to attract new visitors to Deer Flat National Wildlife Refuge, the refuge Friends group invited local children from the Treasure Valley to help count birds for the yearly Great Backyard Bird Count that is held each February. The data from the bird count is compiled by Cornell University Lab of Ornithology and the National Audubon Society, and used to track bird populations.



Gavin Coyle with his first bird field guide.
Photo by Denise Hughes

We were delighted to have 84 children and parents join us at the refuge on Saturday, February 18th. Once the children and their parents signed in and received a raffle ticket, they visited a station where the children were shown how to use binoculars and a field guide, and were given the basics in bird identification. Many children helped to identify

the birds at the feeders around the visitor center (American Robins, Red-winged Blackbirds, American Goldfinches, and Dark eyed Juncos), but many more

headed outside to count the birds on the lake, and along the nature trail. The counters spotted Tundra Swans, Common, Hooded, and Red breasted Mergansers, Prairie Falcons, and a Merlin. One lone adult Bald Eagle was also seen by most of the counters.

When the birds were busy elsewhere, the children had the opportunity to build a bird feeder from a gallon milk jug, to draw their favorite bird on a mural that will hang at the refuge, and to play bird bingo and a bird memory game. Cookies and hot chocolate after the nature walk were also a big hit.

We counted 37 species of birds, but more importantly, we introduced Deer Flat National Wildlife Refuge to many people who had not visited the refuge before. It is the mission of the Friends group to help ensure that the refuge is viable for many generations to come. With events such as the Great Backyard Bird Count, we hope that many people in our local area will spend time at the refuge.



Cathy Eells helping with bird identification.
Photo by Denise Hughes

Mann Lake: A Place to Learn About Birds

Terry Gray, Bird monitor



Greater Yellowlegs at Mann Lake IBA. Photo by Terry Gray

"It is extremely rewarding to see small children's faces as they look at a new bird for the first time through a spotting scope."

I have been an active birder for seven years, and I have learned more about birds, and how to identify them, at Mann Lake than at any other location. Mann Lake is an irrigation reservoir in Lewiston, that represents the largest body of standing water in

this dry agricultural region. The water covers approximately 135 acres, and the shoreline is mostly mud. At the southeast corner of the reservoir there is a riparian area that provides nesting areas, and offers food and cover for migrating passerines.

During the summer, water is continually being drawn from the reservoir to irrigate lawns. The original intent was to provide water for fruit orchards, but these have since been replaced by residential developments. Drawing down the reservoir forms new mud each week from late summer to fall, which is perfect for migrating shorebirds. The migration actually starts around the 4th of July as plovers, stilts, avocets, yellowlegs, sandpipers, dowitchers, phalaropes, and many more, stop to feed.

For the past two years I have been leading weekly Saturday field trips starting in early August/September, and continuing through October. Last year, 44 birders observed 121 species of birds during these Saturday morning visits. Every week we have a different list of birds and a different list of bird watchers. To identify some birds, particularly juvenile shorebirds, the group will spend much time discussing and checking field guides.

I have compiled a check list for Mann Lake that has 196 species of birds. The checklist is available at: <http://www.palouseaudubon.org>. Some of the rarer species we have seen include Surf Scoter, White-winged Scoter, Long-tailed Duck, and Red-breasted Merganser.

People of all ages join me from all over the country if they happen to be visiting this part of Idaho. It is extremely rewarding to see small children's faces as they look at a new bird for the first time through a spotting scope. And it makes my day to hear someone say "That is another Life Bird for me, thanks."



Pair of Great Blue Herons at a Nest

Colony Watch

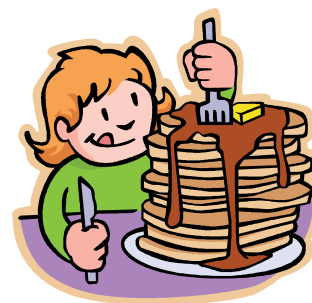
Do you have a local heron rookery that you visit each spring? Have you ever been interested in learning more about the breeding ecology of herons and egrets? Then we have the project for you! We are looking for information on heron rookery locations across the state (including those not located on an IBA), and for people that are interested in going out to check a rookery a few times

each spring to let us know how the birds are doing. Participants will be provided with necessary training and datasheets, as well as in-depth descriptions of their rookery species from the Birds of North America species account series. If this is of interest to you, contact Colleen Moulton at cmoulton@idfg.idaho.gov, or 208-287-2751.

Cherry Springs Birding Breakfast

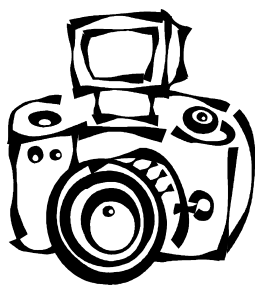


The Portneuf Audubon Chapter, based in Pocatello, will be holding their annual Cherry Springs Birding & Breakfast on May 19th this year. Bird walks start at 7:00 a.m., followed by breakfast in the amphitheater from 9:00 - 10:00 a.m. This **free** event is a long-standing tradition (you'll have to attend to find out just how long). It is an event for birders and non-birders alike, and is always well attended...even in the rain! Come join the Audubon chapter as they cook up hundreds of pancakes and sausages, just for you!



For those who are averse to caffeine and meat, there will also be plenty of juice, fruit salads, and pastries available.

Lake Lowell Photo Blind



The newly formed "Friends of the Deer Flat Refuge", has taken on a project to build a photo blind at the Deer Flat National Wildlife Refuge; a refuge improvement project suggested by Refuge Manager, Elaine Johnson. The Friends are excited to get underway

with the construction of the photo blind as soon as the site is approved by Refuge Management. Construction plans for the blind will be developed by taking into account the requirements of the Refuge and the needs of potential photo blind users. Jimmie Yougensen, President of the Southwestern Idaho Birders Association

(SIBA), and others in his group, will be closely involved with the planning process. The Refuge is very supportive of this project, and has offered the use of their shop for construction purposes. As our rather new organization is funding-limited, we hope to secure building materials through donations from lumber yards or other individuals and organizations wishing to make a contribution. Actual construction of the Photo Blind will be completed by members of the Friends group, SIBA, and any other interested parties. The Friends of Deer Flat Refuge invite your participation in both the construction process and the use of this photo blind. For more information, contact Jim Iverson, Project Chairman FDFR at 208-459-6051.

Stories? Pictures? Ideas?

Do you have an ongoing project at an IBA that you'd like to tell others about? Or perhaps you have some great photos of IBAs that you'd like to share? If you do, send them in to "Idaho IBA News"! We would like to keep this newsletter as interactive as possible—a forum for IBA folks to communicate with one another. If you have something to share, send it to cmoulton@idfg.idaho.gov, or the mailing address on the back page.



Aspen in the South Hills IBA.
Photo by Julie Randell

'Idaho Birding Trail' is Complete!

The Idaho Birding Trail Guidebook is now available for only \$5 at all Idaho Department of Fish and Game regional offices, selected visitor centers and bookstores. This guidebook features 175 birding sites around the state that provide premier bird watching opportunities. Some sites are well-known birding hotspots and other sites are locally identified "secrets" for great birding opportunities. This guidebook includes color photos and maps as well as written driving directions, site descriptions and the best times to bird each area. This guidebook was created by the Idaho Department of Fish and Game with extensive help from local partners, including many Audubon members. For more information on the Idaho Birding Trail guidebook or to find out how you can purchase a copy, contact Sara Focht at sfocht@idfg.idaho.gov or by calling (208) 921-6933.



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 **Audubon** IMPORTANT BIRD AREAS

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